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Indochina Situation

/Colonel Belleux on Viet Minh Strategy and
Intentions/

French High Command has limited fragmentary information on enemy movements.

- No information to indicate whether VM plan to launch frontal assault on Luang Prabang or by-pass and continue south and west.

VM offensive clearly political, rather than military.

- Avoiding decisive military battles.
- Seeking ground-gaining at minimum risk for psychological effect on French home front.

VM strategy hopes to:

- Wreck Navarre plan.
- Convince French through VM gains that negotiations necessary soon.
- Affect Berlin talks through showing VM power.
- Wreck French talks with Cambodia and Vietnam by showing French can't defend Laos.

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VM pursuing this confident of success and early negotiated peace on their terms.

If French can maintain firm political position to end of fighting season (mid-May) VM may experience psychological let down.

- Then internal Viet Minh problems and falling VM Army morale may lead in 6 months to greatly strengthened French position for negotiations.
- Significant indications VM fear:
 - Chicom domination over VM.
 - US intervention in the war (hence close VM surveillance O'Daniel movements).

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Indochina - Latest Dien Bien Phu news

No new reports since last evening.

Situation then:

French troops -- 4,000 - 5,000 strong --
attacking north and east against encircling
Viet Minh -- hand-to-hand combat -- heavy
air and artillery support.

Reportedly made gains of up to 9 miles,
capturing some high ground.

French claim inflicting "heavy losses"
on Viet Minh, admit own losses "appreciable."